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Meeting Minutes 12/20/2006

School Facilities Working Group
December 20, 2006 7:00 p.m.
School Committee Room

Approved

Present: Nate Levenson, Al Tosti, Bill Shea, John Cole, Martin Thrope, Michael Ruderman, Brian Sullivan

Minutes of November 8, 2006 meeting and June 28, 2006 were approved unanimously.

Mr. Levenson recapped the last meeting and the consensus to pursue four options. He discussed the SBA's condition assessment of the two schools. By all accounts, Thompson is in worse condition than Stratton and warranted a rating of 3. Mr. Levenson noted that Stratton's rating of 2 will be challenged when the Town's letter of interest is submitted but he believes that it will be difficult to get it changed.

Mr. Levenson then reviewed the four options summarized in a handout.

Option 1. Wait for State reimbursement

Option 2. Wait for State reimbursement, but repair and upgrade while waiting. Mr. Levenson explained how estimate of \$100,000 per year in renovation was derived which primarily covers aesthetic improvements. Mr. Cole felt that \$150,000/year for Stratton was more realistic given the length of time and some old major systems. Several variations of option 2 were discussed including:

- 2a) Wait on Thompson with no renovation money. Include \$150,000/yr for Stratton.
- 2b) Put some money into Thompson, say \$100,000/yr.
- 2c) Start new Thompson now and invest \$150,000/yr. for Stratton.

Option 3. Rebuild both schools now on our own. Need \$29 million. How much is authorized by past vote? Need to ask for an additional \$15 million. This option assumes the DOR interpretation on debt exclusion limits requiring \$17 million in new authorization.

Option 4. Rebuild both schools now assuming taxpayer commitment limits. Costs are the same but takes a more conservative view as to what has already been authorized by voters. Requires \$25 million in new authorization.

Mr. Thrope raised the issue of presenting future cost in current dollars. Mr. Levenson suggested doing it both ways. Mr. Thrope also noted that as the debt gets paid off, the burden on the taxpayer will be decreasing.

Mr. Levenson mentioned Ron Spangler's comments that the Net Present Value of the various options has to be considered. Show impact on tax bills. Shouldn't show options 3 and 4 separately—go with DOR's ruling. Add new option 5—wait for reimbursement at Thompson but build Stratton now. (See note below.)

Mr. Shea handed out a packet of information providing background on all the previous debt exclusion votes, DOR's ruling, summary of funds remaining, and a suggested letter to Katherine Craven of the SBA.

The key point of the letter is to get clarification as to whether the Town would be penalized if it proceeded with a school project prior to SBA approval. Mr. Levenson noted that the only Town that he was aware of that did this was Bedford but that there were several unique factors involving Bedford. All agreed that this was an important clarification.

Mr. Levenson reviewed another handout that addressed equity issues between all the schools. From the analysis made, educational parity among the 7 schools was not a serious problem. As a matter of fact, Thompson, which is in the worst physical shape, has the highest academic performance. It was agreed to put information on the website after the next meeting.

Calculations on three (3) additional options will be run.

- Start Thompson rebuild now and invest in Stratton
- Start Stratton now and wait on Thompson.
- Wait on Thompson, renovate Stratton but don't rebuild.

The committee also discussed holding a public forum in February.

The next meeting was set for January 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Note: Mr. Spangler's memo actually read, in part, "I think there's a missing scenario – which is to wait for state reimbursement on Thompson but assume reimbursement never comes for Stratton. In that case we'd start Stratton a year or two after Thompson, and the town would bear 100% of the cost. I'd like to see this added to the mix, because I think it's a realistic possibility."

Submitted by:

Brian Sullivan